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THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

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Some time ago the English Classical Association appointed a committee, under the chairmanship of Professor Sonnenschein and consisting of representatives from all departments of classical teaching, to investigate and report on the teaching of Latin and Greek in the English secondary schools. This committee presented a preliminary report in January, 1906, recommending "that in the lower and middle forms of boys' public schools Greek should be taught only with a view to the intelligent reading of Greek authors". This resolution was adopted by the Classical Association. By such action there was no intention to exclude the study of grammar or the practice of simple forms of composition as means to the reading of Greek literature, but in the opinion of the committee the teaching of Greek differed from the teaching of Latin in many essentials.

In Latin, grammar and composition should be studied not only as a means to the intelligent reading of Latin authors, but also as a linguistic discipline and with a view to training the mind in habits of clear and logical thinking. Perhaps, however, what needs more emphasis is that the literary and historic interest of the authors read should not be neglected even in the earlier stages of learning. It is too common even at the present day for teachers to set up a mechanical conception of Latin as a merely formal gymnastic, instead of regarding it as a literature capable of exerting a strong attraction upon the pupil and of becoming a powerful influence for the training of taste, the development of character, and the awakening of intellectual ambitions. It should never be forgotten that Latin literature has largely contributed to making the life and literature of the civilized world of to-day what it is. These two ends of formal and literary study are, however, not inconsistent with one another. Latin may and should be so taught as to realize them both at the same time. The practice of composition is of the utmost importance, not only as developing habits of clear thinking, but as giving a fuller insight into the spirit of the Latin language.

The ends to be kept in mind in the study of Latin are, therefore, two: (i) the intelligent reading of the more important Latin authors; (ii) a linguistic and logical discipline. In connection with the first of these ends, the committee desires to direct attention to the importance of planning out the course of reading on some well-considered principle, so as to make it as profitable as possible and representative of what is best in Latin literature".

The final report of the committee was presented some months ago and is printed in *The School*

World for November, 1907 (Macmillan and Co.).

At about the same time the Board of Education issued a circular on the same subject in which the recommendations were substantially the same as those of the Classical Association. With regard to Latin the circular says:

It is an essential part of a complete modern education. No study of the development of European institutions is possible without a knowledge of Latin, for in it are contained the records of the development of law, religion, literature and thought. Latin is an essential instrument for the educated use of the English language, and a knowledge of it is necessary to any scientific study of the Romance languages. A knowledge of the structure of the Latin language is the most valuable help to understanding the general principles of the European languages, and its regular and formal syntax is a valuable corrective to the loose phrasing which easily arises from the syntactical freedom of English.

In its final report the committee insists that inasmuch as the study of the mother tongue precedes that of any foreign language, the early training in English should be extremely careful. It makes the demand that before a child begins the study of a foreign language he should have learned to use his mother tongue "with some degree of correctness and fluency . . . and have acquired a good stock of words and a habit of orderly and connected thought". This seems a reasonable demand. We are accustomed in this country to have pupils come up to the study of Latin with absolutely none of the ability here expected. Orderly and connected thought seems to be an ideal which the ordinary training in English regards as unattainable. The report goes on:

They should also have learned to read aloud with accuracy and intelligence, and so far as possible, with taste; and they should have become familiar with a considerable quantity of good English prose and verse of a character suited to their age. A feeling for literature may thus be developed which, while of the highest value in itself, will also help the pupil afterwards to appreciate the Classics.

Here again, judging from the finished product in this country, no such requirements exist, for reading a passage with expression and comprehension—even with the correct pronunciation of the English words—is an unusual accomplishment.

The report urges very strongly that in the pre-

liminary stages there should be (as we have in this country) daily lessons. It properly explains that too wide an interval between lessons makes it inevitable that the impression of one lesson should be lost entirely before the next lesson is undertaken. It also tends to destroy interest by breaking continuity. A second foreign language should not be taken up for at least a year after the first foreign language has been begun and inasmuch as schools nowadays usually demand several foreign languages, the study of Latin should not be postponed beyond the age of eleven.

The recommendations with regard to the methods of teaching are those with which we have been familiar for a considerable time. The report emphasizes that unessentials should be removed from the first year—unfamiliar words, unfamiliar forms, unfamiliar constructions. For example *filibus* is of such rare occurrence that it should never be taught to first year students; so the accusative singular of words like *tussis*, *amussis*, Greek substantives, rare or non-existent comparatives, constructions like *non dubito quin*, etc. There is obviously a grievance in the English schools in regard to such matters which we have had either the good luck or the good judgment to avoid.

HOMER AND HIS AGE¹

The title of Mr. Lang's book is likely to raise false expectations. It is not, in spite of the preface, an attempt to reconstruct in imagination the age of Homer in all its social, political and institutional details. In reality, it is simply a continuation of his defence of Homer's unity with special reference to the archaeological side of the controversy.

The part actually devoted to the facts of Homeric life is found in chapters 4-10 and 12. It deals with (1) The feudalism of Homer; (2) Burial and Cremation; (3) Homeric Armor—Shields and Corselets; (4) The use of Bronze and Iron; (5) The Homeric House; and (6) Homeric Language.

His conclusion on these points are as follows:

(1) Homer describes an age of loose feudalism, in which Agamemnon is the overlord and the rest of the Achæan chieftains are the vassals.

(2) Cremation, with cairn-burial of the ashes, is the rule in Homer for gentle and simple alike; and this fact, together with the absence of the cult of the dead, points to a period intermediate between the Mycenaean times and the earliest post-Dorian graves.

(3) The shield of Homer is always the ἀμφιβρότη the man-enclosing shield, sometimes like the shield of Ajax, semi-cylindrical, sometimes of the double targe or figure 8 form. These shields did not impede rapid motion on foot.

(4) The Homeric warriors wore hauberks or corselets of linen or of bronze, which served as protection against a shower of arrows but were worthless against a powerful blow at close range.

(5) The weapons in Homer are uniformly of bronze. Iron is mentioned frequently, but as the metal of peaceful implements. The use of both, side by side, with this differentiation, may be accounted for by the fact that the working of iron was not completely understood and that therefore iron weapons were likely to be less effective than bronze.

(6) The Homeric house in both Iliad and Odyssey had upper chambers, a women's apartment and a separate chamber for the heads of the family.

So much for the constructive part of Mr. Lang's argument. If we turn to the preface and to the task he sets himself, certain things are quite apparent. His thesis is that "Homer depicts the life of a single brief age of culture". And here both qualifying adjectives are important. For while a single age would explain the unity of impression, the *unus color* on which he insists so often and so much, it would not at all establish unity of authorship. If the age is brief, however, diversity of authorship would amount almost to collaboration, and that is scarcely an admissible hypothesis. Now, all that Mr. Lang has stated would, if convincingly demonstrated, go a certain way toward fulfilling the first of the two adjectives, but throws no light on how long an age may have lasted of which the things stated were true.

Again, granted that it is a single brief age which we meet in Homer, there is the often-advanced possibility that, just as the poet or poets undoubtedly refer to a time prior to their own, so they give this time a background, not of their own age, but of a traditionally-remembered past. An essential element in establishing Mr. Lang's position is the refutation of this hypothesis. Indeed, there is a running attack throughout the whole book on precisely this view of Homer.

But are Mr. Lang's views beyond peradventure? In the first place, the omissions are as striking as the selections. In a discussion of Homer's age, it is reasonable to expect a somewhat extended reference to Homeric religion and superstitions, to Homeric geography, to Homeric law and institutions. Although Mr. Lang, at the beginning of chapter 4, says that he will speak of all these things, as a matter of fact, he does not. There is absolutely no systematic treatment of them, and only a few cursory and widely-scattered allusions. For all Mr. Lang tells us, a thorough examination of the matters mentioned will effectually destroy his edifice. While therefore, we may first, in lawyer's parlance, demur to Mr. Lang's case because of insufficiency of allegations, there are, besides, serious

¹ *Homer and his Age*. By Andrew Lang. London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co. (1906). Pp. xiv+336. \$3.00.